

Montana tops all states in prison population drop



Gov. Brian Schweitzer talks with Dorothy Gorder, left, and Kristine Anderson, two residents of the Elkhorn meth treatment center, during a tour of the Boulder facility.

Ferriter also applauded the work of the hundreds of corrections employees across the state and said offenders also deserve some of the credit for the decline in inmate numbers. Thousands of offenders have contributed by choosing to make their lives better and avoid crime, allowing the department to manage more offenders outside of prison walls, he said.

By Bob Anez
Communications Director

A national report showing Montana reduced its prison population more than any other state in 2007 is the result of policies and programs promoted by Gov. Brian Schweitzer and implemented by the Montana Department of Corrections during the past few years, Corrections Director Mike Ferriter said.

"Through Gov. Schweitzer's leadership and insight, we have seen corrections philosophy turn into reality," he said, after reading the report by The Pew Charitable Trust.

"This effort is a tribute to the governor's commitment to change and his willingness to embrace innovation to achieve better results for offenders, society and our taxpayers."

***"If we build more brick
and more barbed wire,
we'll just have more people
in jail and we'll just
have more failed
families and we'll spend
more money."***

-- Gov. Schweitzer

The Pew report said that Montana's prison population dropped almost 4 percent last year, the largest decline in the country. At the same time, the total U.S. prison population grew by 1.9 percent, or some 25,000 inmates. Thirty-six states saw an increase in their inmate populations.

Schweitzer, who took office slightly more than three years ago, highlighted the study in a visit to the Elkhorn treatment center where he told 40 women that the year-old meth treatment program is part of the reason for the report's findings. New treatment programs make more sense than new prisons, he said.

"If we build more brick and more barbed wire, we'll just have more people in

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In wake of bus crash

Governor honors, supports prison staff

By Bob Anez
Communications Director

Gov. Brian Schweitzer praised their training, common sense and values. Warden Mike Mahoney branded them heroes. They were talking about Montana State Prison employees who came to the aid of dozens of co-workers injured in a November bus accident.

The comments came during the governor's visit to the prison in early February to recognize the efforts of all those who helped at the scene of the accident on Interstate 90 near Warm Springs. The Tucker Transportation bus carried 25 prison employees to their work shifts. All were injured, one fatally, when the bus struck a deer and rolled.

Schweitzer, who presented a certificate specifically commending the work of the prison infirmary staff, said he wanted to honor those who used their "training, Montana common sense and values" in responding to the tragedy.

Mahoney, who spent hours at the accident scene that morning, said he saw heroes on that highway. "They stepped up at the right time for the right reasons," he said. "We came together as a family."

He also praised efforts of the human resources staff and the state Department of Labor and Industry for helping find temporary light-duty work assignments for some of the injured as they continued recuperating.

Cynthia Davenport, human resource director at the prison, said she too was impressed with all those employees who assisted. "We do a hard job, but we know how to take care of each other," she told Schweitzer.

Eunice Cole, a registered nurse at the prison, recalled how the injured repeatedly encouraged their rescuers to help others hurt in the accident. She said she has never been so proud of being a nurse at Montana State Prison.



Gov. Brian Schweitzer reads a gubernatorial declaration honoring prison staff that aided those employees hurt in a bus accident.



Registered Nurse Eunice Cole, center in white, talks to Gov. Schweitzer during his visit to the prison.

But Schweitzer went beyond honoring those who responded to the accident. He said he also wanted prison employees to know how important corrections is to his administration and that it has demonstrated a willingness to invest in the department and the work it does.

"I am here to honor you and to say I support you. I support you in your mission," Schweitzer told about three dozen prison employees gathered in a room at the prison. "I appreciate what you do. It's not easy. I support you. I will con-

Editorial praises early population trend

EDITOR'S NOTE: This editorial appeared in the Jan. 10 edition of the Billings Gazette. Reprinted with permission.

After many years of burgeoning inmate populations and budget overruns, the Montana Department of Corrections is seeing indications that those trends could reverse.

It's not because fewer offenders are coming into the state corrections system; 6.2 percent growth in the offender population is projected. Instead, more of those offenders are being placed in community corrections programs, such as treatment for addiction or mental illnesses.

The Legislative Fiscal Division analyzed data from the first quarter of the biennium (July, August and September) and reported to legislators that the average daily population of state prisoners may be 150 fewer than the level budgeted for this fiscal year and 101 fewer than budgeted for FY2009. The Legislative Fiscal Division staff estimated that could equate to a general fund cost reduction of \$5 million to \$10 million for the biennium.

"Right now the prison population appears to be down," said Gary Hamel of the DOC health planning and information services division in Helena. "We're

certainly happy with the direction; we just don't know if it's a trend that will continue for two years,"

In October 2006, the state counted 142 state prisoners in county jails. In October 2007, that number was down to 28. As of Jan. 7, it was up to 53. Also this week, the state wasn't using 14 of the contract prison beds around Montana. The number of men in secure detention statewide had dropped 4 percent while the number of women dropped 25 percent.

These numbers raise hope that the department's community corrections strategy is working. In recent years, DOC has started programs to treat offenders' meth addictions, hired chemical dependency treatment counselors to work in probation and parole offices and hired more probation and parole officers. The new programs are efforts to deal with growing numbers of offenders in the most effective way to provide public safety and offender rehabilitation.

Instead of building more prison cells - the most expensive option - the state is using community corrections to save money in the short term, and to increase the likelihood of getting offenders off drugs, back to work and out of the system for the long term.

If the trend continues, the benefits to the state budget and its citizens will be significant.



Gov. Brian Schweitzer, right, talks with Warden Mike Mahoney during a visit to Montana State Prison in February.

Governor

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ntinue to support you."

He said he's happy to defend his record when it comes to corrections as this election season gets under way. "We are willing to try things that we haven't tried before. We're willing to risk making some mistakes along the way."

If corrections employees do their jobs, the system should be able to place in communities those offenders who have the best chance to succeed there, he said. Most governors are reluctant to take the risk of putting more offenders into community corrections programs, rather than in prison, but he's not, Schweitzer said.

"That's not being soft on crime; that's being realistic," he added.

"I appreciate what you do. It's not easy. I support you. I will continue to support you."

-- Gov. Schweitzer

Parole Board, DOC officials meet

Psychiatric evaluations of offenders, waiting lists for pre-release centers and conditions imposed on offenders under community supervision were among the topics discussed at a meeting between Department of Corrections officials and representatives from the state Board of Pardons and Parole.

The mid-January meeting was the first opportunity the two groups had to gather since December 2006. All those attending agreed that, given everyone's busy schedule, twice-yearly meetings were more practical than attempting to hold quarterly meetings.

Board member Teresa O'Connor said she believed that nationally recognized "psychological testing instruments" should be used to assess all offenders who appear before the board, not just psychological reports based on an inter-

view. She said a more professional tool can be used easily, administered on a computer without the need for a psychologist present.

Chairman Vance Curtiss said he and other board members were satisfied with existing assessment methods and that testing is not needed on every offender.

Craig Thomas, executive director for the board, said psychological testing already is done for violent offenders and those with a history of mental health issues. He estimated that amounts to about half the offenders seen by the board.

Jeff Walter, senior parole board analyst, said about 128 offenders were not yet on parole because they were waiting for room to become available in prerelease centers around the state. Of those, 49 had prerelease placement as a condition of their parole and 79 other were waiting to have their cases reviewed because the centers are full. Walter said about 40 of the inmates are sex offenders, which most centers won't accept.

Pam Bunke, administrator of the Adult Community Corrections Division, said one option for those denied a spot in prerelease would be to outfit them with electronic monitoring devices at a cost of about \$11 a day. She said that would provide an added level of security to communities where those sex offenders are on supervision.

Bunke also provided an update on development of the sex offender treatment program authorized by the 2007 Legislature. She said her division has consulted with the Montana Sex Offender Treatment Association and national Center for Sex Offender Management to develop the request for proposals that will be issued later this year for the project.

Mike Ferriter, Department of Corrections director, said he hopes the Parole Board, prerelease centers and communities will feel more confident about placement of sex offenders once they complete the treatment.

Diana Koch, chief legal counsel for the department, discussed proposed changes in the administrative rules governing conditions imposed on probationers and parolees. She said the changes would make three conditions standard: no drinking of alcohol, no gambling and no possession or use of marijuana for medical purposes.

She noted the most controversial of those restrictions was the one dealing with marijuana. Public hearings on the rule changes were held in early January and early March.

Board member O'Connor suggested that payment of court-ordered child support be another standard condition. "These are conditions that are needed in every case in order to have an effective system of probation and parole," she said.

Koch noted that the rules would allow a judge to exempt an offender from any of the standard conditions.

Union donation honors victim of bus accident

MEA-MFT, the labor union representing many Department of Corrections employees, has honored Sonja Ryan, the Montana State Prison employee who died in a bus accident Nov. 16.

Reflecting the request of the Ryan family, the union's donation of \$500 was given in her memory to the fundraising effort for creation of a chapel at Montana State Hospital in Warm Springs.

MEA-MFT President Eric Feaver notified Dan Parish, president of Local 4700 in Butte, of the donation in January.

"I commend and appreciate the response from MEA-MFT for its gracious contribution to this worthy cause in honor of Sonja Ryan," said Mike Mahoney, warden at Montana State Prison.

Ed Amberg, administrator of Montana State Hospital, also applauded the union's contribution. "I worked with Sonja years ago before she transferred to MSP," he said. "She was a very nice person who worked hard and was greatly respected by her co-workers."

Ryan was one of 25 prison employees traveling on the bus to work when the vehicle struck a deer, went off the interstate highway and rolled. Everyone on board was injured to some degree in the early-morning accident.

The chapel project was authorized by the 2005 Legislature with a requirement that up to \$350,000 in funding for construction of the facility come from private sources.

A chilly dip for a warm cause



ABOVE: Stephanie Boysen and Bill Hogart leap from the dock into the 38-degree water.
BELOW: Rae Ann Forseth heads for the icy lake.



Nine current or former Department of Corrections employees and family members took a dip in a lake. But this was no ordinary jump into balmy waters.

The leaps occurred in mid-February, on a day when a brisk west wind chilled the bones and blocks of ice had to be carved from Helena's Spring Meadow Lake to provide enough frigid open water for the plungers to have a soft landing.

The event was the annual fund-raising effort for Special Olympics Montana. The 186 participants raised more than \$27,000. The corrections team raised \$1,906. The members, dressed in prison orange jumpsuits, were Rae Ann Forseth and daughter Mackie Glosser, Ted Ward, Nancy Wikle and daughter Madison, Lisa Hunter, Stephanie Boysen, Bill Hogart, and Wayne Ternes.

Participants collected pledges for their willingness to jump in an ice-cold lake with little more than swimsuits on underneath. The dives occurred in shallow water from a dock near the lake shore. More than 300 people watched the shivering plungers as they quickly waded out of the water and were wrapped in a towel to ward off the wind. Divers in dry suits and some with scuba gear stood ready to assist.

Forseth, Ward and Hunter are part of the training bureau, Boysen and Wikle work in the Youth Services Division, Hogart is employed at Montana State Prison, and Ternes is a former Training Bureau staffer.



ABOVE: Madison Knight and mom, Nancy Wikle, take their plunge before a large crowd of onlookers.



LEFT: The corrections team, left to right, was Ted Ward, Mackie Glosser, Stephanie Boysen, Lisa Hunter, Madison Knight, Nancy Wikle, Rae Ann Forseth and Wayne Ternes. Not pictured: Bill Hogart.

Riverside

Federal grants boost technology

By Cindy McKenzie
Superintendent
Riverside Youth Correctional Facility

Over the past few years, Riverside Youth Correctional Facility in Boulder has received a portion of the federal educational grants the department is awarded each year.

Riverside's education department has put this money to good use. Each of the four teachers endorsed by the Office of Public Instruction in the core subject areas has had the ability to enhance their curricula, textbooks, reference material, and technology.



Two students at Riverside Youth Correctional Facility work on a project in the computer lab.

been installed in the gym mezzanine. This allows teachers to hold full school assemblies to show presentations or conduct a learning session with all students at once. Once that system is connected to the Internet, the teachers will be able to use this system to access a multitude of learning experiences through the Web.

Another example of increased use of technology is the purchase of lightweight, portable, mini-laptops. Each is assigned to a student and carried from class to class. The students are able to type homework assignments and research papers, and store their work until ready to print.

The devices are recharged each week at a station that is linked to the English teacher's classroom computer and allows the teacher to scan all files on each unit for appropriateness of student work. These units also work with the accelerated reading program that was recently purchased with a grant. This curriculum provides a systematic way of improving reading skills using assigned books, post-tests and points.

Riverside also has developed a resource room with computers and tutorial software that allows individualized tutoring in math, reading and writing. This gives students struggling in a subject some exposure to a dif-

One focus has been on increased use of technology. Riverside has a computer lab that is used daily. This lab has been completely updated and has been networked to teachers' laptops for improved communication and monitoring. Teachers can monitor work being done on each student computer, send individual instruction via computer, and remotely lock any computer if necessary.

The computer lab also includes a portable SMART board and projector, allowing the teacher to involve all students in interactive instruction. Students also will learn how to develop and present material using this technology.

A second wall-mounted SMART board, along with ceiling-mounted projector and speakers has



Students use individually assigned mini-laptop computers to prepare homework and research papers at Riverside Youth Correctional Facility. (Photos by Mary Bagley)

Justice Dept. honors DOC youth programs

The U.S. Justice Department has recognized the Youth Services Division in the Montana Department of Corrections for its programs and services offered to American Indian offenders.

The federal agency's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) awarded the division its "best practices" rating, which indicates the state's efforts represent a standard for other states to follow in reducing minority involvement in the corrections system. The honor, a first for Montana, applies to programs dealing with both incarcerated and paroled youth.

OJJDP has established a goal of encouraging development of initiatives to reduce "disproportionate minority contact."

The recognition extended to Montana's youth corrections programs is part of the congressional act that mandates, among other things, that states must address disproportionate minority contact within their juvenile justice systems.

Steve Gibson, administrator of the Youth Services Division since 2001, has been addressing that issue since becoming superintendent of Pine Hills Youth Correctional Facility in Miles City 17 years ago. American Indian offenders represent about 6.5 percent of Montana's population, but account for 39 percent of the incarcerated population of youth.

"Even though we have no control over who is committed to us by the courts, we are already seeing early signs of a decline in revocations to our male correctional facility," Gibson said.

Gibson outlined some of the steps his division has taken to address the problem. He created a native American liaison in his division and the staff has applied evidence-based theories and concepts in developing programs and services for American Indian offenders.

He said the programs focus on such things as changing antisocial attitudes, beliefs and feelings; reducing antisocial peer associations; promoting affection and communication within families; developing pro-social relationships and activities;



From The Director

Mike Ferriter

In the corrections profession, good news is sometimes scarce. That's because the nearly 13,000 people we're charged with supervising have a history of making bad choices and can be very unpredictable. Often times the actions of these individuals becomes a reflection on the work we do.

But corrections in Montana has had some good news lately.

The state drew national attention in February when a report by The Pew Charitable Trusts showed that Montana was better than all the states in reducing prison population in 2007. The number of Montana inmates dropped almost 4 percent last year. While that may not seem like a big change at first, the number has to be put in perspective.

Nationally, the states' prison population increased 1.6 percent, or by 25,000 inmates. Some had big growth – Kentucky at 12 percent, New Hampshire at 6.6 percent and Iowa and Mississippi around 6 percent.

Why is Montana leading the way in cutting prison populations?

Educational, treatment and vocational training programs in prison, and development of effective alternatives to prison is the answer. While prisons always will be necessary for the most dangerous and violent offenders and are needed to hold some offenders accountable, other programs are required for offenders to be able to live and work in communities. We have developed a host of those programs.

This kind of success is the work of many people. It begins with strong leadership from someone with the authority, political courage and far-sighted vision required to make change happen. That has come from Gov. Brian Schweitzer, who has made it clear that corrections must do its job differently in order to do it better.

Our corrections employees – all 1,200 of them – also deserve credit. No matter what position they hold, from support staff to administrator and from payroll staff to parole officers, every department employee helps make this

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The Helena Prerelease Center opened in 2001.

Prerelease: New lease on life

**By Angela Brandt
Helena Independent Record**

For many men, the thought of abiding by a curfew, receiving a small allowance and being watched while at work would seem arduous.

But for Erik McQueen, it is better than the alternative.

As a resident at the Helena Prerelease Center, McQueen must plan his activities a week in advance in order for his ventures to be approved. He must urinate in a cup when asked.

As reward for good behavior, he is able to go out to dinner with friends and have 24-hour visits with family.

It beats prison.

"It's been a pretty good experience. For me, this is a privilege," McQueen said.

Although the prerelease center generally gains attention for escapees, most of its 98 residents obey the rules and stay out of trouble. The minimum-security center houses adult men who have committed an array of crimes from assault with a weapon to forging checks. After an acclimation period, residents are allowed to go to work, buy their own clothing and overall have much more freedom than they would behind bars.

While learning life skills lessons, the residents slowly reintegrate into the community.

Some, like McQueen, translate those lessons into a fresh start on life.

Criminals walking away from the Helena Prerelease Center is nothing new. Sometimes they are caught; sometimes they merely disappear.

Sometimes they again commit crimes.

The center's two most recent walkaways, Jordan L. Adams and Jacob K. Kraus, both 20, allegedly went on an armed robbery spree in Montana, Wyoming and South Dakota with three other suspects in October. After being captured, both have pleaded not guilty to nine federal charges, including carrying a firearm while committing a violent crime and being felons in possession of a firearm.

In 2007, the center had a total of six walkaways. According to the Montana Department of Corrections, the Helena center accounted for 12.2 percent of capacity for prereleases in the state and 11.5 percent of the state's escapes. The five other prereleases in the state are in Billings, Great Falls, Missoula, Butte and Bozeman.

Since the Helena Prerelease Center opened in June 2001, 19 residents have walked away. Two of those men remain at large - Jesse A. Pearson, who was in for forgery, escaped Dec. 19, 2005, and Carlos Gonzalez, who was serving time for criminal endangerment, escaped June 4, 2007.

Usually, walkaways are caught shortly after they flee, said Amy Tenney, the center's program director.

McQueen says he can't see why anyone would leave the center when they are so close to being released.

"I think they're nuts. Honestly, I don't understand it," he said. "Why blow it that soon? I think it's insane."

The runaways give the center a bad reputation, according to McQueen.

"The majority of us are doing what we need to do to get back to our families," he said.

Helena Police Chief Troy McGee said his officers have

Prerelease

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had very few run-ins with residents of the center.

"The main time we encounter them is if the prerelease call us," he said.

If the men don't comply with the facility's rules, for example getting fired from a job or verbally threatening another resident, a warrant is quickly issued and the offender is carted to jail.

"We have a reputation for being tough and we're proud of that," Tenney said, adding the facility has had one fist fight, which was quickly contained.

McGee said arrests are made at the center once a week on average and all have been compliant.

Police Chief McGee also is a member of the center's committee who selects who is admitted to the facility.

The committee includes local probation officers and volunteers who live within a mile of the center, at 805 Colleen St. Potential center residents coming from prison are first reviewed by a state screening committee.

Those admitted from prison must meet certain requirements. They must be able to work on "the outs" and be free of felony escape convictions for three years.

Criminals committed to the custody of the Department of Corrections also can be referred to a prerelease in lieu of prison time. These offenders are screened by probation and parole personnel prior to being referred to the local committee. Men who have violated their probation can be recommended by a judge for placement in a prerelease instead of serving prison time.

Selection committee member David Blade, who works as supervisor of criminal records at the state Department of Justice, said the group reviews the profiles of about five to 20 potential residents a week. Reports include criminal history, victim impact statements and recommendations from probation officers.

The 12-person committee judges each referral on a case-by-case basis, Blade said.

"We have a very conscientious group, who is definitely not rubber-stamping. It is a tough screening process to get good people," Blade added.

The center has not had any sex offenders as residents. Blade said the committee would not be completely opposed to taking in a sex offender in the future if the right candidate came along.

According to the state's registry, the prerelease currently houses 27 registered violent offenders, including six men convicted of robbery, six for assault with a weapon and five for aggravated assault.

Blade moved near the facility after it was built and said the center did not deter him from choosing his home.

"I fully support the prerelease concept. Helena benefits over communities that don't have prereleases," he said, adding his neighborhood has not had any safety issues with the center.

The residents have a much better standing the community when they are released into the public with money and a job, Blade said.

"It's in my backyard and I'm OK with it. I'd rather we had it than not. I feel they're good neighbors," he added.

Tenney, the center's program director, said the facility works hard to have a good relationship with the surrounding community.

Most residents may leave the facility to work or for an approved activity, if they have a pass. They travel on buses, by bike and on foot as they are not allowed to drive. Center employees perform random checks on residents at work and while they are out on pass by either calling or visiting the establishment. Residents must log in and out with employees.

At the center, security is paramount. Employees conduct five head counts and four walk-throughs per eight-hour

shift. If anyone is not accounted for, law enforcement is notified.

A system of 40 cameras helps employees monitor the residents 24 hours a day. Residents are subject to random pat downs and room searches. The residence wing consists of two- and four-person rooms.

The rooms are similar to a dorm with each man getting a small bed, a wardrobe, a desk and a bulletin board. The facility also has a four pay phones, a basketball court and smoking patio. Residents can have approved visitors during specific hours.

A handful of men at the center are inmate workers, who clean and do maintenance at the facility in order to earn their way to resident status. They usually serve six months as a worker and then six months as a resident, the average stay. While workers, the men can earn the right to leave the facility with a chaperone and go for 15 minute walks on a designated route. The inmate workers have served a lot of time, have had conduct problems and other issues that

*"I fully support the
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have prereleases."*

**-- David Blade,
screening committee member**

Prerelease

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mean a closer eye needs to be kept on them, but it doesn't mean they have committed the most serious of crimes, explained Sue Carroll, chief operations officer.

Tenney said the majority of residents have abused drugs and alcohol. The men are randomly tested for drugs by urinalysis and for alcohol by Breathalyzer at least once a month each.

Toward the end of McQueen's sentence, after completing many, many hours of treatment and counseling, he reflected on his criminal past and the charges that led to his stint at the center.

"I wish I wouldn't have acted so impulsively," he said.

McQueen was facing three years in prison for probation violation. After he was arrested in Libby in November 2005 for felony criminal mischief for vandalizing a car by kicking it, McQueen was out on probation but "blew it" by using drugs and alcohol. In lieu of prison, he was sentenced to three months of Treasure State Correctional Training Center boot camp, followed by six months at the prerelease.

McQueen has especially benefited from the anger management and chemical dependency classes offered at the center. When he was younger, he didn't think he needed to be taught such tools, but now he wishes he would have learned them sooner.

The criminal mischief charge was his first felony following "a lot of stupid drinking charges," he said. He was intoxicated the night of his latest felony arrest as well.

"I could blame it on the drinking, but I know how I am when I drink, so it's my responsibility," he said.

In addition to chemical dependency classes, McQueen also met with a counselor once a week. Having already gone 17 months without alcohol, he said he has a good recovery plan for living in the outside world.

Part of what will make him successful is the life skills education he received while on the inside.

He worked at a local grocery store as a stocker for the dairy department and worked construction when the weather permitted. Residents work in establishments from fast food restaurants to construction to engineering.

The center works with 47 employers and is adding new ones frequently. Two of the prerequisites are the job must

offer supervision at all times and the center's employees need to have access to the residents.

Angela Blixt, owner of Captain Jack's Bistro & Bar, has employed a few men from the center as cooks and said she has had good experiences. The residents have not shown up late or under the influence of intoxicants, she said.

"The prerelease keeps a good eye on them," said Blixt, who got involved with the center after a member of its staff approached her with the opportunity.

When asked if she would hire another of the facility's residents, she answered, "I would in a heartbeat."

Allowances are doled out once a week. How much each resident gets depends on their phase level, from one to five determined by the time served and behavior while there. A phase five resident earns \$40 every Tuesday; a phase one gets about \$15 a week.

The center's five case managers and 25 other employees teach the men life skills including how to budget, clean and parent.

"Budgeting is a big thing," Tenney said.

Some men spent their first allowance on cigarettes and candy and then don't have enough money to call their bosses on a pay phone.

"We warn them but some have to learn the hard way," she said.

The residents' paychecks cover their allowances and pay for restitution and child support.

From July 2006 to June 2007, the center's occupants paid \$48,000 in restitution and \$147,000 in taxes, Tenney said. The men must pay all their restitution before they earn an allowance.

In addition, residents are charged \$12 per day for room, board and treatment.

"It's like an apartment that you share with 96 other people," McQueen said.

He said his time at the center has allowed him to save some money but also learn and grow as a person.

After his release last week, McQueen planned on returning to Libby and getting a job in construction.

Tenney said many of the men end up moving back home while others decide to remain in Helena. Once they are approved for release, most go out on probation while a small percentage moves into halfway houses.

McQueen, who will be on probation until April 2009, hopes to eventually move back to Helena to train to operate heavy equipment.

"You can use this for a really great fresh start," he said.



Erik McQueen (Photo by George Lane, Independent Record)



Barnaby holds a sculpture given by her staff at her retirement party. (Photo by Mary Doll)

Barnaby retires as regional P&P chief

Loreen Barnaby, who was regional probation and parole administrator in Glendive for the past 10 years, retired March 31 after two decades in the human services profession.

Her retirement came after her marriage to a rancher from Wyoming. The couple married in November 2007 at Miles City.

Barnaby, who grew up on a Wibaux-area ranch, said the decision to leave corrections was not a difficult one because it was time.

"I'm a type of person who needs a lot of new challenges in front of me," she said. "Corrections is a very high stress job, but this was a good chance to go and do something completely different."

Now, she said, the most stress she encounters is during calving season. Given her background and where she grew up, living on a ranch with her new husband is like going home again.

Barnaby, 42, got into corrections on what she calls "a fluke."

She attended Rocky Mountain College in Billings with the intention to go into the paralegal field, but took a psychology class and got hooked. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology in 1988, as well as a paralegal certification.

Barnaby said she was drawn to corrections by her personality and inner drive. "I felt a need to help, a need to see if I could make a change, make a difference," she recalls.

She had jobs as a fill-in counselor at Billings Youth Home, Dennis Wear Group Home and Horizon Home in Billings. She also worked as a clinical assistant at Yellowstone Treatment Center and as a counselor at the Youth Services Center in Billings. The latter job, from 1987 to 1991, was her first full-time job in the human service profession.

She entered the corrections field as a social worker and later a treatment specialist at Pine Hills Youth Correctional Facility in Miles City. Barnaby was a juvenile parole officer for four years before becoming administrator for Region VI in August 1998.

"I am looking forward to a little less stress in my life surrounded by nature and animals," she said of her transition to ranch life.

Region VI encompasses 17 counties that make up the eastern third of the state. The region is responsible for supervising almost 400 offenders with a staff of 13. Offices are located in Glendive, Glasgow, Miles City and Sidney. The Dawson County Regional Prison and WATCH East, the DUI treatment program in Glendive, each has an institutional probation and parole officer.

Emery Brelje, a probation and parole officer in Glasgow, has replaced Barnaby as administrator. (See related story on page 13.)

Bob Paul serves on MSU college panel

Bob Paul, deputy warden for security operations at Montana Women's Prison, has accepted an invitation to become a member of the advisory council for the new criminal justice program at Montana State University-Billings.

The council is responsible for providing advice on curriculum for the academic program.

"Establishing new friends and support from community leaders such as yourself is extremely important to me and I am hoping that you are willing to be part of this exciting journey," said Tasneem Khaleel, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the Billings campus, in asking Paul to join the council.

"Your knowledge, experience and influence to serve as an active advocate connecting the criminal justice program with the community, state and region would be most valuable," she wrote. "The College of Arts and Sciences will gain increased connectedness with the legal, law enforcement and correctional communities as well."



Paul

STRAUGHN AWARDED MEDAL OF VALOR

Jon Straughn, network operations manager for the Department of Corrections, was one of eight Montanans to receive the Medal of Valor for life-saving bravery.

He and three others were honored by Gov. Brian Schweitzer for rescuing two young children from a burning car in a parking lot of an elementary school at East Helena. The others involved in the rescue were Gene Pizzini, Ken Sargent and Michelle Lingenfelter.

The men used their own bodies to shield the children from the flames as they struggled to rescue them from the vehicle. Firefighters responding to the scene credited the four with saving the children's lives that day in early September 2006.

The certificate accompanying the medal said it was in "recognition of your courageous efforts in saving the lives of young children by freeing them from a burning vehicle in East Helena, Montana."

"We honor ordinary Montanans who perform extraordinary deeds," Schweitzer said during a ceremony at the Capitol in February.

"Giving these awards on behalf of Montanans is an honor," he said. "These stories are inspirational and true to the Montana spirit of helping a neighbor in need – often saving a life. I join all Montanans in saying thank you, to our award winners; your selfless acts will always be remembered. I am humbled in the presence of heroes."



Medal of Valor recipients hold their awards during a Capitol ceremony. From left: Lt. Gov. John Bohlinger, Gene Pizzini, Jon Straughn, Michelle Lingenfelter, Ken Sargent, Gov. Brian Schweitzer and Maj. Garth Scott, public affairs officer with the Montana National Guard.



Jon Straughn holds his Medal of Valor, received for helping save two children from a burning vehicle.

Brelje takes over P&P Region 6

For Emery Brelje, being a judge just wasn't that much fun.

Four years as Glasgow city judge made him realize he missed the excitement of being closer to the front lines in the criminal justice system.

So he became a probation and parole officer for the Montana Department of Corrections.

That was seven years ago and now he is administrator of the state's geographically largest probation and parole region. Brelje (pronounced BRILL-gee) replaces Loreen Barnaby, who retired to live with her new husband on their ranch in southwestern Wyoming.

Brelje has been working in the criminal justice field since he joined the Glasgow police force in 1974. He became chief in 1993 and held that position until he retired four years later. He served as city judge until deciding he needed something a little more exciting.

"As judge, I was seeing the reports and listening to the testimony of law enforcement officers," he says. "I missed that. I missed the action. I wanted to be involved more directly in dealing with offenders, in being right there and confronting a person who has committed an unlawful act.

"I missed the hand-on activities" from his days as a police officer, says Brelje, 56.

It seemed that a probation and parole officer would be more exciting job than being judge and, after all, the pay would be better.

The Outlook native has worked out of the Glasgow office for the past seven years. As administrator, he will continue to live in Glasgow rather than move to Glendive where the regional office is located. He expects to make plenty of the five-hour, round trips between the two cities in his new capacity.

But that won't be the only traveling he'll do, not when working in the massive Region VI. He plans to drive a lot to keep tabs on what's happening.

Brelje is responsible for a staff of 12 that covers a 17-county region that makes up the eastern third of Montana and is larger than the state of Mississippi. While the sparsely populated area has only 385 offenders on probation and parole, the sheer size of the 49,183-square-mile region is a daunting challenge.

With such a large area to cover, time management for he and his staff is vital.



Brelje

"When we have offenders becoming problems and needing additional attention, it's very challenging to be an effective presence when they are so far away," Brelje says.

The region has contracts with local law enforcement agencies to lend a hand. For example, a sheriff's deputy will help with a urinalysis or check on an offender to ensure he has complied with his curfew.

"That's really helped out," Brelje says.

He acknowledges the job of probation and parole officer was a more difficult transition than he expected. The workload, maintaining records, handling hearings and a variety of treatment professionals, and the need to comply with policies and procedures that differ

for various offenders was a lot to cope with at first, he says.

Brelje estimates it took him four years to become fully comfortable and confident in the job. His career as police officer provided valuable experience in investigative work and dealing with offenders. "Thank God I had that background," he says. "The experience was extremely valuable to me."

Looking ahead to his new administrative position, Brelje realizes he has a lot to learn and needs to learn it as fast as possible. He wants to "make good decisions for the region" and determine how best to use the resources available.

But he's optimistic at least partly because he has a good relationship with the staff he will be supervising. "All I have to do with this crew is not screw up," he says.

Brelje and wife, Cheryl, have two sons, Ben and Sam.

The move to a new administrator is one of several recent personnel changes in Region VI.

Larry Bearley officially retired as a probation and parole officer in September after 26 years with the Department of Corrections.

Karla Grimes-Warner has taken over institutional P&P officer at the regional prison in Glendive after being a P&P officer in Rawlins, Wyo.

Frank Raffaell, Sidney P&P officer, transferred to Billings in October to become IPPO at the Montana Women's Prison. Lloyd Dopp replaced Raffaell in November after working for 30 years in the Sidney Police Department.



Bearley

NEXUS

Meth center graduates 23

By Bob Anez
Communications Director

The rich baritone of about 20 voices echoed the message of hope and a better life off the walls of the gymnasium at the NEXUS treatment center. The lyrics of John Lennon's "Imagine" thundered through the air.

*You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one.*

The NEXUS choir set the tone for the first graduation class to leave the Lewistown facility since it opened a year ago. The 23 men had completed the nine months of intensive treatment that is the landmark effort by Montana to break the grip of methamphetamine addiction on offenders sentenced to the Department of Corrections.

The 80-bed facility, operated by Community, Counseling and Correctional Services under contract with the department, marked the milestone with offender family members, corrections officials and local government leaders attending a rousing ceremony at the end of February.

Corrections Director Mike Ferriter noted how appropriate the Lennon song was for the graduates.



NEXUS graduates, each in a white shirt and tie, applaud as others receive their commemorative certificates and coins.

"Take a second and look around this room and think about this moment," he said, referring to law enforcement and correctional officials there. "Would you ever imagine you would have this group of people here today in such a positive way?"

Ferriter called the men pioneers who will be the examples for those who follow after them at Nexus. "Can you imagine you will be setting the tone for those who come after you? We're in this together. This a monumental day for you, the Department of Corrections and the state of Montana."

He noted the people of the state had invested thousands of dollars in giving grads an opportunity to rid their lives of meth, and he warned them, "Don't take that for granted. Take this investment and make the most of your lives."

Mike Thatcher, chief executive officer for NEXUS operator



Members of the NEXUS choir offer their rendition of "Imagine" during graduation ceremonies at the meth treatment center.

Grads

FROM Page 14

CCCS, thanked corrections officials for initiating the program and the residents of Lewistown for supporting it. At the state level, Gov. Brian Schweitzer, Ferriter and Pam Bunke, administrator of the Adult Community Corrections Division, deserve credit for the innovative project, he said.

"You have completed an arduous journey through what is a cutting-edge program," he told the graduates, each one dressed in a white shirt and tie.

But, Thatcher added, they have challenges ahead in coping with meth. "The drug isn't going away. It's the decision to not use again – that's what we're talking about here today. With freedom comes commitment ... one day at a time, one moment at a time," he advised.

"No one can strip you of your recovery; now the choices are yours. I believe in fairy tales and living happily ever after. Isn't that what we all want? You have been given a chance to do that."

Eric Boucher, valedictorian for the Moccasin unit at NEXUS, had a message for those men still in the program: "If you truly want to change, no one here will give up on you."

Shane Park, his counterpart in Snowy unit, told his fellow addicts: "Don't be ashamed about being an addict. Be ashamed about doing nothing about it."



This large wall mural, painted by graduates from the NEXUS meth treatment center, formed a backdrop for the graduation ceremony.

Each graduate received a certificate and a coin commemorating his achievement, presented by Joe Zygmund, clinical director, and Rick Barman, security director. As they walked back to their seats, the graduates shook hands with, hugged and offered high fives to NEXUS staff.

Following their term at NEXUS, the graduates will spend six months in prerelease centers for aftercare programs.

The first graduates from Elkhorn, the women's meth treatment center in Boulder, moved to prerelease centers earlier this year.

Justice

FROM Page 7

encouraging self-regulation and problem-solving skills; and reducing chemical dependency.

The division partnered with White Bison Inc., a culturally based chemical dependency movement that developed a 12-step treatment program for Montana's juvenile offenders, Gibson said. In addition, the division launched quarterly "wellness days" at Pine Hills and Riverside youth correctional facilities and the Youth Transition Centers. These events feature elders, medicine men and women, and traditional Indian people conducting ceremonies and teaching youth about their culture, he said.

Also, Pine Hills and Riverside have implemented the Indian Education for All curriculum, and the division helped sponsor a statewide Sacred Hoop journey to promote sober and healthy lifestyles among incarcerated American Indians.

More information on Montana's best practice rating can be found at:

http://mpg.dsgonline.com/dmc_county_detail.aspx?DMCcountyID=33&print=yes

Senate OKs re-entry funding measure

The U.S. Senate in March passed a bill that provides \$362 million to states, local governments and nonprofit organizations to help inmates adjust to communities after prison.

The Reducing Recidivism and Second Chance Act, which passed the House in November, will provide former inmates with job training, literacy training, substance abuse treatment, counseling, housing and mentoring services.

The Second Chance Act also includes a limited pilot program for early release of eligible non-violent elderly prisoners over the age of 65 who have served the greater of 10 years or 75 percent of the term of imprisonment to which the individual was sentenced.

Supporters say the measure provides crucial programs capable of supporting successful rehabilitation and re-entry.



HOPE

Juvenile parole vet sees it in his kids

By Bob Anez
Communications Director

For Tom Pinsonneault, his job as juvenile parole officer is about promise and potential. It's about the belief that the youth he deals with every day can remove themselves from a life cycle of crime and punishment.

"Working with juveniles, you find hope. Because they are young, you have that," he says. "There is hope with them."

That hope is what feeds Pinsonneault's love for his job and his bubbling enthusiasm for the work. He eagerly talks about his profession, the words coming in a rush as he explains why he embraces the challenge of dealing with young offenders, helping them through their bumpy lives and helping them stay out of trouble.

The teens come to him for advice from problem boyfriends and pregnant girlfriends to the lure of drugs

and the battles with parents. "I want that from the kids," Pinsonneault says. "I like to stop crises before they start."

Pinsonneault, 42, has worked in juvenile parole since 1989, first with child protective services in the now-defunct Department of Family Services and then in the Youth Services Division of the Department of Corrections following a 1990s reorganization. His caseload is composed of 17-18 youths released from Pine Hills or Riverside youth correctional facilities.

Headquartered in Mis-



Tom Pinsonneault in his Missoula office. (Photo by Brett Gordon)

HOPE, Page 17

CCA marks 25 years in letter to DOC

Corrections Corporation of America marked its 25th anniversary with a letter to Montana Department of Corrections Director Mike Ferriter promising to continue helping the agency by “offering the safest, most reliable and cost-efficient correctional services available anywhere.”

Signed by Jim MacDonald, warden at CCA’s Crossroads Correctional Center in Shelby, the letter said the

department has helped make the company’s milestone possible.

“As the founder of the private corrections industry, we have a sincere and deep commitment to safety and efficiency,” MacDonald wrote. “Our partnership with you is a success because you, too, share the same commitment.”

The letter noted that CCA runs the fifth largest corrections system in the

country, with the federal government and three states having more extensive operations. CCA operates 65 facilities in 19 states and the District of Columbia, and has 16,000 employees.

Crossroads opened in 1999 and has about 500 state inmates. It also houses federal offenders for the U.S. Marshals Service. It is the only privately operated prison in the state.

Hope

FROM 16

soula, he is the primary juvenile parole officer for Lake and Sanders counties, but also works as an outreach officer in Missoula, Mineral and Ravalli counties. In the latter capacity, he helps arrange house arrests, urinalysis testing and transportation of juveniles to required meetings or jobs.

Pinsonneault likens his work to that of a parole or probation officer handling adult offenders in the intensive supervision program, or ISP.

“I work very intensively with them,” he says of his charges. “I’m involved with their day-to-day activity. There’s a lot of personal contact, at least once a week and often more than that. They call me with good news, bad news. They need someone to talk to, a parental figure.”

Young American Indian offenders are a particular challenge because many are not used to consistency in the way they are supervised. “They have to get used to a system that is going to hold them accountable for their actions,” Pinsonneault says. “The tribal system doesn’t handle them the same as the (state) corrections system.”

Pinsonneault sees his life as one that gave him the tools to flourish in his challenging job.

His father, Dick Pinsonneault, was a commander in the U.S. Navy and that meant the family moved often. Tom was born in Puerto Rico when his dad was stationed at Roosevelt Roads Naval Station. The family hopscotched across the United States in the following years, with stops in Rhode Island, Iowa, Illinois and Washington state. The Pinsonneaults finally landed in St. Ignatius on the family ranch when Tom was a sophomore in high school.

All that travel gave Pinsonneault valuable tools for his career.

“You develop a knack for fitting in. You develop a way of interacting with people that’s very unobtrusive. You cannot be a hot-head. It taught me to be a funny guy” to get

along with friends he knew would be only temporary fixtures in his life, he says.

Puerto Rico gave him a lesson in being in a minority among the Hispanic population. That experience has served him well in managing American Indian youths who make up the majority of his caseload. “It taught me about what it’s like being an outsider, not a member of the dominant culture,” he says.

Pinsonneault says his transient life taught him skills to cope with people, but that came at a price. He also learned how to keep people at arm’s length because he always knew the time to move on would soon come. “There were no lasting friendships, so family becomes your primary support.”

When he arrived in the Mission Valley, he learned to accept people for what they are. He saw the “undercurrent” of the Flathead Indian Reservation and wanted to do something to fix it. He wanted to help people, a drive he inherited from his parents.

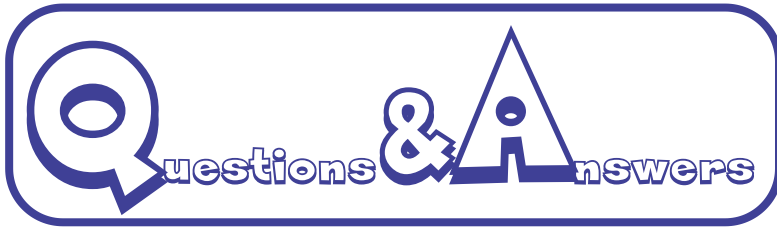
Despite all the temporary friendships Pinsonneault saw come and go in his life, one came back.

He met Brenda while living in Puerto Rico and they “dated” when in the sixth grade there. Years later, they bumped into each other at an all-class reunion for Roosevelt Roads students in Colorado Springs. She didn’t recognize him, but he remembered her. Three years later, they married.

Pinsonneault raves about his life and his work. He lives in a beautiful part of Montana, where he easily indulges his passion for golf, snowboarding, camping and almost anything that involves the outdoors. He travels a lot – from Elmo to the north, Darby to the south, Thompson Falls to the west and Clinton to the east – and finds plenty of satisfaction in the beautiful scenery of western Montana.

And that may mystify some people who misunderstand the nature of the youths Pinsonneault deals with every day.

“Many people think that the kids we work with are going to prison and that’s that,” he says. “That’s unfortunate, because there is always hope for our kids.”



Prerelease centers

What is a prerelease center?

Prerelease centers are facilities in the communities designed to ease the transition of an offender from a correctional institution to living independently in the community while providing treatment, education, counseling, job training and placement, and transitional living opportunities.

Who operates prerelease centers?

Non-profit corporations under contract with the Department of Corrections. Contracts are awarded based on a competitive process.

Who goes to prerelease centers?

Offenders who a judge determines do not need to go to prison, some offenders who violate conditions of their community placement and those in need of a continued level of supervision following a treatment program.

Where are prerelease centers located?

Billings, Bozeman, Butte, Helena, Great Falls, Missoula

How many offenders are in prerelease centers?

About 800 male and female offenders. Prerelease centers are 180-day programs, so they can handle about 1,600 offenders annually.

How much does a stay in a prerelease center cost?

The center have different rates that reflect their varying sizes and related costs. In fiscal year 2007, the daily rates average \$52.08 per male offender and \$60.11 for each female offender.

How are offenders chosen for a prerelease center?

Institutional probation and parole officers assess inmates about to leave prison, and traditional P&P officers do the same for offenders revoked for a violation of their community placement. Offenders committed to the department are assessed by their P&P officer and at the Missoula Assessment and Sanction Center. In each case, the offender's file is then sent to centers for review and a decision on acceptance.

What is a screening committee?

Each center has a screening committee that reviews offender information and decides whether the offender is appropriate for the local facility. A committee includes staff members, city and county law enforcement representatives,

members of the center's board of directors and a community member. The department cannot force a center to take anyone.

What do offenders do in a prerelease center?

They leave the center only for approved destinations, such as jobs. They are required to check in and out, and center staff monitors the offenders' movements. The centers require offenders to find a job and each center has a full-time employment specialist that assists them in finding work. The centers provide assistance with resumes and job interviewing techniques, assess every offender coming into their program and develop a program to cater to each offender's needs. Treatment, educational, vocational, parenting and counseling services, and classes in avoiding criminal thinking are provided.

Is placement in a prerelease center a "free ride?"

No. Offenders in prerelease centers are restricted in where they go and what they do. They are required to be accountable not only to themselves, but also to their victims, their community, the centers and the Department of Corrections. They help pay for costs of their stay, income taxes, child support and restitution to victims.

How do prerelease centers monitor offenders?

Case managers set up programs for the offenders and then ensure that the programs are completed. The case managers establish schedules for each offender and track if the offender is where he or she is supposed to be. The case managers talk with each offender's employer and get regular progress reports on offenders' work.

Do many offenders walk away from prerelease centers?

No. The centers had 52 escapes in 2005, 51 escapes in 2006 and 43 in 2007. Based on the number of offenders housed at the centers each year, that is an average escape rate of 3 percent. On average, 94 percent are captured and usually within a few days.

What happens when offenders walk away?

They are charged with felony escape and can face up to 10 years in prison. They forfeit all their personal property left at the center and can be permanently barred from another prerelease center placement. Centers are required to report the escape to law enforcement and the news media. They distribute information about the offender and the department issues an arrest warrant.

'Enough is enough'

By Gov. Brian Schweitzer

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following guest editorial appeared in Montana newspapers in mid-March.

Somebody had to say enough is enough.

Montana had the nation's sixth highest growth in prison population in both 2003 and 2004. According to the U.S. Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics, the average annual growth in Montana's prison population in 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 was 5.5 percent. That was nearly three times the national average during that period (1.9 percent). Previously the solution was to pour more concrete and buy more barbed wire. I knew there had to be a better way. A way that saves taxpayers money and helps those felons who can be rehabilitated get back on their feet, while still keeping the hard criminals behind bars.

So when I took office in 2005, I invested in community corrections. We have created 172 more prerelease beds in the past three fiscal years, 120 meth treatment beds were added in 2007, a 40-bed DUI treatment center opened in Glendive in 2005, and 155-bed facility opened for women in Billings, featuring a prerelease center, chemical dependency treatment program, and an assessment and sanction center.

Now the report card is in. Late last week, Montana received some very positive news. A study from The Pew Charitable Trusts showed Montana leading all 50 states in the decrease of the number of incarcerated people last year. The nation's overall prison population grew by 1.6 percent in 2007, while Montana's number fell 3.9 percent.

Montanans can be proud of our efforts to protect public safety, hold people accountable and help folks deal with addiction problems, mental illness or whatever is at the root of their criminal behavior. Montana's achievement is the result of an innovative plan to increase alternatives to prison.

We have nearly 9,000 offenders on probation and parole and, every day, they continue their efforts to remain law-abiding and productive citizens. Supervising an offender on probation or parole costs about \$4 per day, compared with as much as \$80 a day to keep an inmate in prison.

A recent University of Montana study showed that among the offender population in Montana, 46 percent have a mental illness and a staggering 93 percent have a substance abuse problem or a chemical dependency. The goal of many of the new programs is to provide the kind of individualized treatment that will work at reducing the number of repeat offenders. In 2006, Montana had 3,572 people behind bars. At the beginning of 2008, that number had gone down to 3,431. My goal and the goal of the Department of Corrections is to reserve prison cells for 20 percent of our most dangerous felons and manage the remaining 80 percent in some kind of community program.

Underlying all this is the need to maintain public safety and offender accountability. Community corrections is allowing us to do just that and save the Montana taxpayers money. Montana can be proud of our efforts to create a corrections system that is smart, efficient and effective in protecting public safety, ensuring offenders are accountable for their crimes and help them overcome addictions, mental health problems and lives dominated by crime.

Enough was enough.

Corrections employees are among youngest

The Montana Department of Corrections has one of the youngest work forces in state government, according to a new report.

The annual "Employee Profile" publication by the Department of Administration shows the average age of corrections employees is 44, compared with a state government average of 47. Only three offices – Board of Public Education, Public Defender's office and Political Practices – have a lower average age than does corrections.

The Corrections Department has 1,246 employees, making it the fourth largest agency behind Public Health and Human Services with 3,019, Transportation with 2,268 and Natural Resources and Conservation with 1,541.

Corrections ranks fourth in both minority employees (23) and employees with disabilities (17).

About 60 percent of corrections employees are male, compared with the state government average of 52 percent.

The typical corrections employee has worked almost 10 years in state government, slightly less than the nearly 11½-year average for all departments. Only nine of the 31 agencies have an average length of service less than corrections.

The average corrections employee has about 135 hours (17 days) of unused vacation time, slightly below the statewide average of 150.5 hours.

Study

FROM Page 1

jail and we'll just have more failed families and we'll spend more money," he said, after touring the Boulder center.

Schweitzer's rousing comments were met with cheers, whistles and applause from the women. While some of the women will fail in their recovery effort, they will be in the minority, he told them.

"There will be a lot more of you that will be successful," he said. "You'll be successful with your families again, you'll be successful at work, you'll be productive parts of your community. So every time I see a mother with a child, that is successful, I will remember that this can work.

"I want you to be successful," Schweitzer added. "We'll give you the tools to be successful."

The 40-bed center had graduated 20 women from the nine-month program by the time the governor visited in early March. They moved to prerelease centers for six months of aftercare to help them adjust to living again in communities.

Ferriter said the Elkhorn program and the 80-bed NEXUS meth treatment center for men in Lewistown are just part of the menu of programs implemented in recent years to provide more alternatives to prison. Since 2004, the department has:

- Expanded capacity in the prerelease centers by 172
- Added chemical-dependency counselors in probation and parole offices
- Increased the probation and parole staff by more than 20 percent

- Opened an 88-bed program to divert from prison those offenders who violate conditions of their community placement
- Added a 40-bed DUI treatment center in Glendive
- Launched a 155-bed women's program in Billings that combines a prerelease center, chemical dependency treatment and assessment and sanction center.

"When the governor invited me to be a part of his team and



Gov. Schweitzer addresses women at the Elkhorn meth treatment center.



Corrections Director Mike Ferriter and Gov. Schweitzer talk during the governor's visit to the Elkhorn meth treatment center.

STUDY, Page 21

RIGHT: Gov. Schweitzer listens to Summer VanHook as she shows him her room at the Elkhorn meth treatment center.



Study

FROM Page 20

help him lead the Department of Corrections he clearly indicated that he was looking for progressive and positive change," Ferriter said. "He gave me the direction and support to manage offenders differently than in the past.

"Our vision is to provide offenders with the necessary treatment and opportunities to get back to their homes and communities as soon as possible, and to be in a position to be the mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, wives and husbands, sons and daughters, and employees that they are capable of becoming," he said.

The Pew report noted that Montana's prison population decreased from 3,572 at the start of last year to 3,431 by the end of the year. Montana is one of only four western states to see a decline. The 13 states in the West saw a combined reduction of just 133 inmates, or 0.004 percent. Those states accounted for about 22 percent of the overall U.S. prison population.

Although the report did not discuss steps taken in Montana, it did say that policy makers in some states are becoming increasingly aware of "research-based strategies for community corrections."

The study said states are beginning to diversify their "array of criminal sanctions with options for low-risk offenders that save tax dollars but still hold offenders accountable for their actions."

That mirrors the policies implemented in Montana and addressed by Schweitzer and Ferriter in their comments on the state's national ranking.

(See related article on Page 19.)

Opinion:

Smart corrections

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following editorial appeared in the March 4 edition of the Helena Independent Record. Reprinted with permission.

After last week's rather scary news that for the first time in U.S. history more than one of every 100 adults is behind bars, a higher rate than any other nation on earth, it came as a bit of relief to realize that the story in Montana is a lot brighter.

It turns out that the number of incarcerated people in Montana dropped by nearly 4 percent last year - the biggest decrease among the 13 states whose prison population went down.

That doesn't mean that Montana law-breakers are suddenly seeing the light and turning into a bunch of altar boys. It means that the state's corrections system finally is beginning to handle convicted criminals with an eye toward actual corrections.

Following a decade - the 1990s - in which Montana added almost 1,000 new prison beds, the state now has embarked on a whole new philosophy: helping criminals deal with the addictions or mental illness that got them into trouble in the first place.

Montana has built lockdown treatment centers for repeat drunk drivers and meth abusers, and it has added mental health and drug addiction counselors to the state's probation and parole offices. It also has expanded pre-release centers that let felons stay in their communities and continue to hold jobs, albeit under close supervision.

The goal, according to Department of Corrections Director Mike Ferriter, is to reserve regular prison cells for the 20 percent of Montana's convicts who are the greatest threat to society. Ideally, punishment for the rest would take place at some sort of community facility in which their punishment would include the kind of help that will make them less likely to repeat their offenses.

It's not as if Montana had a lot of choice in the matter. Corrections were threatening to eat up the whole state budget. But no matter. What's important is that the fiscally smart thing to do also was the socially right thing to do.

New data center planned on land near Pine Hills

Land belonging to Pine Hills Youth Correctional Facility in Miles City will be home to a \$2.5 million emergency backup data center for state government.

The Department of Administration announced the site was selected over proposals from Forsyth and Billings.

The land, located between a fast-food restaurant and the Pine Hills gymnasium, was donated to the facility long ago and has not been used for about 20 years, said Steve Gibson, administrator of the Department of Corrections Youth Services Division.

Officials noted that use of state land avoids the need to purchase property.

The 2007 Legislature appropriated money for two data centers, one in Helena and a backup version in eastern Montana.

The project is an effort to protect the state's extensive computer storage system from natural disasters and intentional attacks. The Miles City site will have about 150 servers that can take over crucial state computer functions in the event of a failure at the Helena center.

New technology not always safe

Wireless as vulnerable as old telephone party lines

By Jon Straughn
and John Daugherty
IT Bureau

The information technology staff is often asked, "Why can't I use wireless on my state laptop while traveling?" It's a very good question and a hard one to answer without getting into a bunch of geek-speak but we'll try our best.

Computers communicate by sending data envelopes called "packets." When a computer needs to communicate with another one, it wraps all that data into packets and sends it over some form of medium such as an ethernet cable or through the air (wireless) to a receiving computer. The receiving computer, in turn, unwraps the data packets and processes it accordingly.

In terms of data theft, the first and one of the easiest targets for a hacker to attack is the medium used for transmitting data. Hackers love wireless because it's an easy route for intercepting data. A hacker only needs to be in wireless range of your computer and can gather (or "sniff") every packet your computer sends. The hacker then utilizes freely available tools to unwrap that data and can see everything you transmit (i.e. confidential data, username/passwords, credit card information, etc).

This does not take a great deal of technical expertise to do and most high school students could probably carry it out. Most wireless networks, especially public ones, are particularly susceptible to this method of attack.

Wireless connectivity at public venues, such as those available at airports, coffee shops and hotels, often doesn't provide an adequate level of security to prevent hacker attacks on data streams. The state of Montana has invested considerable money in mitigating those attacks with Cisco technologies en-

abling encryption of data transmitted on the state campus.

To explain that simply, a client on the wireless workstation puts a padlock on the chunk of data before it is sent. Someone without the key to open the padlock cannot read the data in any



understandable format.

Few public wireless networks use such a safety feature. Most home wireless routers do not employ padlocks by default because they are designed to work out of the box with little user adjustment. But even when home wireless routers are configured correctly from a security standpoint, the lock is about "ACME" quality. It's not a high-security lock. A gentle tap on that "ACME" lock will render it useless.

A good analogy for public wireless networks would be that of the old party lines used for decades in the telephone industry. For those that never got to experience that feature, a party line was one shared by several homes. If you wanted to call your doctor from your telephone at home, you first picked up the phone to see if your neighbor was using it. If not, you could place the call. If your neighbor picks up his phone as you're sharing private medical information with your doctor, the eavesdropper gets to hear all the juicy details of your latest health concern.

If you had good ears, you could hear a click when the neighbor picks up his phone.

This is exactly how a public wireless network works, except you don't hear the click from the other computer listening in and will never know someone is stealing your data.

Not only can all of your computer "conversations" be tapped, but also the contents of your laptop may be scanned or some malicious software could be installed. This could give the hacker the ability to attack the state from the inside, once the laptop is connected to the secure network again.

Many state workers recall when the state computer system was shut down for two days because of a virus. It is believed that this virus was introduced by a contaminated laptop that was plugged into the state network.

We truly understand the inconvenience of not being able to utilize such a convenient technology. However, the benefits are not worth the potential for another statewide disaster. All it would take is one compromised username and password.

In some cases where there is a strong business need, we have the ability to use a dedicated wireless service from our cellular phone providers that will provide the necessary security for the state, and some staff do use this technology to connect. While this comes with a cost for hardware and a service fee, you get what you pay for.

***Hackers love
wireless because
it's an easy route
for intercepting
data.***

A parents' thanks ...

The following letter was received by Lucille Stokes, administrative support at Treasure State Correctional Training Center. Stokes had kept the Reddys informed throughout their son's stay the boot camp. Their son left the facility in February 2007 and completed aftercare at the Great Falls Prerelease Center.

Hi Lucille!
You may not even remember me, but my son Joe completed boot camp last February and I thought you and everyone there might like to have an update.

Since completion of boot camp and pre release, Joe returned to Helena and lived at home with us for a short while. He has a great new job that he loves, an apartment that he loves, and a life he loves! He just earned his 6 month 'clean and sober' chip from AA and attends 4-5 meetings a week. He even enjoys visiting with his parents on a regular basis! He told us that his worst day now is better than his best "high" in his old life.

For us, it's nothing short of a miracle, and the change happened at the Treasure State boot camp. He is proud (rightfully so) that he made it through and was able to carry what he learned about himself to the real world. It's awesome to see him connected to the values that are important in life.

It was a 9 year odyssey for us, but we always had hope that he'd come out the other side. I just wanted to thank you all for what you do and let you know Joe is building a respectable life ...one day at a time, and we're grateful.

Thanks for all you do!
Judy and John Reddy
Helena, MT



Boot camp trainees grab brooms as spring arrives

After a typical Montana winter, some city sidewalks have as much sand on them as city streets. That brought out the “booters” from Treasure State Correctional Training Center.

Trainees from the state-run boot camp outside of town showed up, brooms in hand, to tidy up the concrete as spring began to arrive in the Deer Lodge Valley.

Work details are a daily part of the camp’s program and normally consist of keeping the barracks spotless, hand sweeping or shoveling of snow, hand weeding and mowing the grounds, and meal clean up. But trainees also are assigned to community work details. Drill Sgt. Wayne Cameron coordinates the projects through various community organizations.

These are highly visible jobs that provide the community with chances to observe the trainees working. Treasure State follows a restorative justice model, and the work details give the trainees the satisfaction of giving back something to the public.

Another result of the projects is plenty of thanks from the community members, who notice and appreciate the trainees’ efforts. One man wrote: “My prayers go out to you young men and your instructors, as you work your way forward to success.”

Treasure State Correctional Training Center is a military-style correctional program for male offenders. The 90- to 120-day program was developed as a method of cutting incarceration costs and reducing the number of crime victims.



Offenders from the Treasure State Correctional Training Center sweep sidewalks in downtown Deer Lodge. (Photos by Sgt. Wayne Cameron)

Riverside

FROM Page 6

ferent learning approach that will augment traditional textbook learning and increase the chances for success.

The science curriculum has been expanded by creating a lab that provides a learning setting equal to a science lab in smaller public schools. This allows the students to participate in weekly hands-on learning when helping conduct a variety of experiments.

While the main educational focus at Riverside is earning high school credits to either catch up to, or stay current

with, grade level while working towards a high school diploma, for some students this is not a realistic goal.

For those students whose age or lack of high school credits makes it unrealistic to seek a traditional high school diploma, obtaining a high-school equivalency diploma (GED) is the option. Riverside purchased a GED preparation software program that provides pre-testing and a needs assessment report for focused preparation.

This report allows each teacher to give specific assignments to address deficiencies in subject areas. This program has enabled students to be fully prepared when going to the Adult Learning Center in Helena to take the official GED test. Since implementing this program, no Riverside student has failed her GED test.

Aldrich leaves women's prison to be probation/parole officer

Mike Aldrich concluded 12 years at Montana Women's Prison in March, when he retired and took a job as probation and parole officer in Helena.

The deputy warden for operations said the move fits well with his personal and professional life. He and his wife have family in the Helena area and the new job still allows him to work with offenders. He plans to build a log house on 20 acres near a lake.

Aldrich, 57, said the decision to leave the women's prison in Billings was a difficult one.

"I like working with offenders and trying to be a positive role model for them and change their behavior," he said.

He said he will miss working with inmates and staff at the prison, but looks forward to supervising offenders in a different world. "This will be dealing with the offenders in their setting where they have a lot more freedom."

Jo Acton, women's prison warden, said Aldrich will be missed.

"He is a very, very dedicated individual and very concerned about the welfare of the women," she said. "He was involved in trying to find programs and vocational activities, anything that would help them better themselves, whether physical fitness or basic education."

A native of Bozeman who grew up in Three Forks, Aldrich spent 25 years in the U.S. Marine Corps beginning in 1970. He worked at the Billings prerelease center for six months before joining the prison staff as a correctional officer in

1996. He became correctional supervisor and eventually associate warden, a title later changed to deputy warden.

"I'm enthusiastic about starting a new career and a new challenge," he said. "I thrive on challenges."

Aldrich and wife, Terri, have a son, Jeremy.



Aldrich

Column

FROM Page 7

work every day. It has always been my belief that it is the role of an administrator and others to function as support to ensure that our direct care staff can do their jobs with as little distraction as possible.

But we can't forget the offenders we supervise, as it is clear to me that many are utilizing the skills they have acquired as a key factor in the recent positive outcomes. Their desire to lead productive, law-abiding lives by conquering their addictions and changing their criminal thinking is critical to the successes we have.

And it's nice to be recognized for our achievements. Recent editorials in the Billings Gazette and the Helena Independent Record have applauded the department's efforts to address the growing prison population. Those editorials are reprinted on pages 3 and 21.

The recognition, though, goes beyond Montana's borders.

The U.S. Justice Department, through its Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention recognized the work of the department's Youth Services Division as a standard for other states to follow.

The federal agency awarded its "best practices" rating to the division for the programs and services it provides to American Indian offenders. Officials cited the state for establishing a model program to reduce minority involvement in the corrections system. This is the first such honor for the state and tells the rest of the country that what Montana's youth programs are doing is what those throughout the nation should be doing.

What greater tribute to the work we're doing than to say this is the way it should be done everywhere?

We have much to be proud of in corrections. This is one of the most difficult professions, but also one of the most rewarding. The fact that others recognize the quality of what our corrections employees do is reason for all of us to take pride in our efforts.

The Training Times

Teach
Learn

Probation/parole staff analyze job for training effort

Just what makes up the job of probation and parole officer? And what sort of training is needed to do that work?

Those were the questions facing 12 staff members from the Adult Probation and Parole Bureau as they gathered at the Montana Law Enforcement Academy in March.

They first completed a job task analysis for the probation and parole officer position. The work is part of the DACUM (Developing A Curriculum) process. The panel's efforts resulted in an occupational profile which describes the job in terms of specific duties and tasks that competent workers must perform. This profile provides an excellent source for analyzing the tasks within a job and will be used for program and training development.

This is the first time the process was used for the position of probation and parole officer. The primary reason for the workshop was to develop the curriculum for the probation and pa-

ANALYZE, Page 27



Melanee Emmett, left, and Abby Gruber work on developing curriculum for probation and parole officer training.

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Analyze

FROM Page 26

role training courses. But the product also will be used to create evaluation standards, recruiting materials, position description and performance checklists.

Normally, the process would have taken a week to complete, but the group of veterans finished in two days. Ron Als-bury, Probation and Parole Bureau chief, led the selected employees drawn from various positions within the bureau.

They were selected for of their expertise and leadership.

They were assisted by Curt Swenson, chief of the Corrections Department's Training Bureau, and Bill Barker, training manager for the Adult Community Corrections Division.

Those participating in the project were Bonnie Boettger, Lewistown; Emery Brelje, Glasgow; David Castro, Kal-



Probation and parole staffers from throughout the state form three groups to analyze the job of officers and develop training curriculum.

ispell; Mary Doll, Glendive; David Dowell, Kalispell; Mel-anee Emmett, Billings; Abby Gruber, Missoula; Jack Harrington, Havre; Tim Meloy, Deer Lodge; and Eric Ohs and Stacy Pace, both from Bozeman.

Future workshops will be planned to continue reviewing and developing training courses and needs for the division.

Training Schedule

April & May

April	Time	Course Title	Site Location	Cost	Hours
9-10	8am-5pm	Medic First Aid Basic Instructor	Anaconda - Location TBD	\$300	16
15	6am-10am	Computer Essentials - Part 1	Computer Lab - MSP		4
15	10am-2pm	Computer Essentials - Part 1	Computer Lab - MSP		4
16	6am-10am	Computer Essentials - Part 2	Computer Lab - MSP		4
16	10am-2pm	Computer Essentials - Part 2	Computer Lab - MSP		4
17	1pm-4pm	Parole Report Writing	DOC Training Center		3
21	1pm-4pm	Parole Report Writing	Alternatives Inc- Billings		3
22	10am-2pm	Security Threat Groups	MSP - Large Classroom		4
23	8am-4pm	Windows File Management	Computer Lab - MSP		7
28-May 1	8am-5pm	Motivational Interviewing	Helena Pre-Release Center	\$27	32
May	Time	Course Title	Site Location	Cost	Hours
8	10am-2pm	Security Threat Groups	MSP - Large Classroom		4
20	9am-4pm	Defensive Driving	DOC Training Center		6
22	9am-12pm	Van Safety	DOC Training Center		3
22	1pm-3pm	Preventing Distracted Driving	DOC Training Center		2



Training Bureau Photo Gallery



Left to right: Linda Moodry, public information officer at Montana State Prison; Tony Heaton, superintendent of Treasure State Correctional Training Center; and Dana Eldredge, administrative assistant at the prison, participate in public and media relations training course offered by the National Institute of Corrections. The program covered such communication topics as listening skills, language use, interviewing techniques, responding to news media questions and working with the media. The training course involved interactive group work, with several different types of scenarios. The exercises were videotaped for review and feedback by participants.



*Photos
by
Lisa Hunter*

Myrna Omholt-Mason, executive assistant to the department director, and Cindy Hiner, right, director of nursing at Montana State Prison, participate in a "making changes" exercise during the Investment in Excellence training course at the DOC training center.



Ted Ward, left, receives the "Grunt, Groan & Git-er-Done award" from Steve Barry, Human Resource Division administrator, at a division meeting. The annual award honors a division staff member who has shown the dedication to go through excruciating pain and still come to work and do the job. Ward, a training specialist, was honored for coming to work after having extensive and painful dental work done.

Bureau adds pair of training specialists



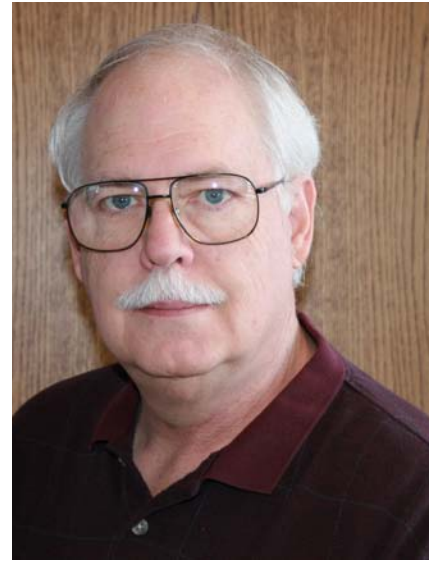
Napier

The Staff Development and Training Bureau would like to welcome two new trainers to its staff.

Tracy Napier has five years experience in criminal justice. She has been a correctional officer, admissions officer and case manager at Montana State Prison. She is the in-service training specialist for the bureau. She works out of the DOC Training Center in Deer Lodge.

"Tracy's energy and enthusiasm are her biggest assets," said Curt Swenson, chief of the bureau. "We're lucky to have her on board and we're excited to see what great new ideas she'll bring to the bureau."

Bill Barker has a rich background in the criminal justice field. With over 20 years of criminal justice experience, his resume includes work as a police chief, sheriff's department captain, investigator and director of security. His new position



Barker

is the training specialist attached to the Adult Community Corrections Division. He works out of central office on the fourth floor in Helena.

"With his deep background in criminal justice, Bill brings incredible insight to the bureau," Swenson said. "He has already proven to be an excellent leader and facilitator and is bringing some innovative new ideas to the Adult Community Corrections Division."



Human resource staffers work on developing division values during a divisional meeting. From left: Wanda Hislop, Kerry Bruner and Francey Moreni.

Comings

EDITOR'S NOTE: These lists of new and departing employees are for the period from Dec. 22, 2007 through March 22, 2008. If you notice any errors or omissions, please call the *Signpost* editor at (406) 444-0409, or e-mail him at banez@mt.gov.

Central Office

Tom Antonick
William Barker
Stephen Brady
John Monson III
Christin Thennis

Montana State Prison

Nicole Anderson
Dean Bacon
John Butler
Wayne Bye
Becky Clark
Virginia Close
Melissa Doris
Lori Fjermestad
Raquel Hairston
Jeanie Hall
Lisa Horsley
Mary Jo Kleinberg
Barrie Malcom
Carrie McCarthy
Rebecca McNeil
Matthew Mickelson
Charles Miller
Shane Morse
Nick Neighbor
Forrest Olson
Warren Olson
Brenda Proxell

Brandon Robinson
Debra Smith
George Smith
Rhonda Vonhagen

Montana Correctional Enterprises

Tammy Schustad

Pine Hills Youth Correctional Facility

Pamela Bovee
Sonya Buchanan
Zachari Cash
Sandra Fogle
Joseph Waller
Greg Zieske

Probation and Parole

Chris Helms, Missoula
Karley Kump, Butte
Andrew Larson, Butte
Russell Ostwalt, Havre
Pip Saukam, Missoula
Heather Smith, Missoula
Claris Yuhas, Dillon

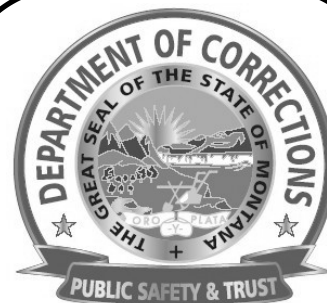
Riverside Youth Correctional Facility

Matthew Horvath
Kirk Israel

Treasure State Correctional Training Center

Youth Transition Center

Timothy Elwood
Lauri Ferrari
Thomas Lehotsky



Montana Department of Corrections Mission

The Montana Department of Corrections enhances public safety, promotes positive change in offender behavior, reintegrates offenders into the community and supports victims of crime.

Next Signpost Deadline

Deadline

Edition

June 30

Summer

Goings

Jack Armstrong
Loreen Barnaby
Jason Beckstead
Lori Blain
Andrea Boyd
Jarrod Cain
Amanda Cash
Sean Curran
Bonnie Davies
Walter Derzay
Christopher Domitraschuk
Rikki Duncan
Teresa Dye

Lynn Faust
Robert Filipovich
Betty Huckins
Deborah Hust
Bobby Jackson
Bernadette Jones
Allan Keenan
Lia Keller
Barry Kennedy
Steven Kinney
Blaine Knadler
Dorothy Lucier
Barrie Malcolm
Deanna Morrison

Tim Nielson
Daniel Parish
Joseph Rainville
Duane Roberts
Virginia Roberts
Jessica Sanchez
Misty Snow
Benjamin Sparrow
Earl Strubeck
Ricardo Valenzuela
James Willis
Genevieve Wilson

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